onkey latest weapon against coyote

comeback in Texas and other states, much-maligned donkey is making a keep their distance when the stuborn beasts are close by. where ranchers know that coyotes LOCKHART, Texas (AP) — The

against coyotes and other predators, said rancher Nanci Falley. dislike of canines, that makes them the donkey, and the animal's innate It's the "deliberate" disposition of

tion, is enjoying a resurgence on guard, an old-time form of protec-State officials say the donkey

that requires training. They have a key," said Falley, who also sells the guard animals. "It's not something ranches around the country. It's such a natural thing for a don-

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away any predator, experts say. or ass - is usually enough to drive donkey - also known as the burro, A well-placed kick from an angry

of the donkeys doesn't hurt, either. sciousness has helped promote the enter the food chain. The low price use of predator controls like guard animals instead of poisons that can years. But a new environmental con-Ranchers have known this for

stand sentry on Texas ranches. About 1,800 of the animals currently females and \$20 to \$60 for males. Prices range from \$75 to \$135 for

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gram also employs traps, lights gram it launched in 1988. The proguard mules and llamas, in a comfrighten away coyotes and wild dogs. sirens and propane cannons to ture includes donkeys, as well as prehensive predator control The Texas Department of Agriculpro-

sheep, with 1.9 million, and angora more than half the damage. about \$9 million worth of livestock to year, officials said, but ranchers lost worth a combined \$66 million last goats, with 1.5 million. The Texas predators. Coyotes are blamed wool and mohair industries were Texas leads the nation in raising

That's where the donkeys come in.

animals in other states as well.

Ranchers put a donkey out to for-age with a herd. Soon the donkey "adopts" the flock as its own and begins defending it against coyotes and other canines.

The best way to choose a guard donkey is to let the animal get acquainted with its herd, then introduce a dog into its pen to see if it repels the canine.

"If the mule or donkey shows ag-gressive behavior toward the dog, Agriculture Department. then you've got a good guard don-key," said Andy Feild, predator management specialist for the Texas

jacks, or intact males, are overly agcess with jennies, or female donkeys, and geldings, neutered males. Some Some ranchers report more suc

gressive with their herds.

23 years and said she doesn't believe mined trait. good guarding is a sexually deter-But Falley has raised donkeys for

she stood in a corral with donkeys Mary Ann, Rachel, Hickory Jackson "I would say about 85 percent make real good guards," she said as and Dandy.

tor for the American Donkey and Though the donkey of fable is obstinate and stupid, Falley, an inspec-

> mals as wise and regal. Mule Society, characterizes the ani-

in their own time," she said, petting a month-old burro she calls "Little Foot." "They don't hurry. They do things

Antonio, in the 1960s and found that chickens after she moved to her donkeys to protect her goats and ranch in Lockhart, northeast of San predators considered her livestock groceries. Falley said she began relying on

Donkeys guarding

LOCKHART, Texas (AP) — The much-maligned donkey is making a The comeback in Texas and other states, where ranchers know that coyotes keep their distance when the stubborn beasts are making asses of themselves.

It's the "deliberate" disposition of the donkey, and the animal's innate dislike of canines, that makes it useful guarding goats and sheep against coyotes and other predaagainst coyotes and other predators, said rancher Nanci Falley.

State officials say the donkey guard, an old-time form of protec-

tion, is enjoying a resurgence on ranches around the country

"It's such a natural thing for a donkey," said Ms. Falley, who also sells the guard animals. "It's not something that requires training. They have a natural instinct to run dogs and coyotes out of their terri-

A well-placed kick from an angry donkey — also known as the burro, or ass — is usually enough to drive

away any predator, experts say.

Ranchers have known this for years. But a new environmental consciousness has helped promote the use of predator controls like guard animals instead of poisons that can enter the food chain. The low price of the donkeys doesn't hurt, either.

Prices range from \$75 to \$135 for females and \$20 to \$60 for males. About 1,800 of the animals currently stand sentry on Texas ranches.

Groups such as the Montana-based American Council of Spotted Asses have been promoting the use of the animals in other states as well.

The Texas Department of Agriculture includes donkeys, as well as guard mules and llamas, in a comprehensive predator control program it launched in 1988. The program also employs traps, lights, sirens and propane cannons to frighten away coyotes and wild

Texas leads the nation in raising sheep, with 1.9 million, and angora

goats, with 1.5 million. The Texas wool and mohair industries were worth a combined \$66 million last year, officials said, but ranchers lost about \$9 million worth of livestock to predators. Coyotes are blamed for more than half the damage.

That's where the donkeys come

Ranchers put a donkey out to forage with a herd. Soon the donkey "adopts" the flock as its own and begins defending it against coyotes

and other canines. The best way to choose a guard donkey is to let the animal get acquainted with its herd, then intro-

duce a dog into its pen to see if it

repels the canine.
"If the mule or donkey shows aggressive behavior toward the dog, then you've got a good guard donkey," said Andy Feild, predator management specialist for the Texas Agriculture Department.

Some ranchers report more success with jennies, or female donkeys, and geldings, neutered males. Some jacks, or intact males, are

overly aggressive with their herds. But Ms. Falley has raised don-keys for 23 years and said she doesn't believe good guarding is a sexually determined trait.

"I would say about 85 percent make real good guards," she said as she stood in a corral with donkeys Mary Ann, Rachel, Hickory Jackson and Dandy.

Though the donkey of fable is obstinate and stupid, Ms. Falley, an inspector for the American Donkey and Mule Society, characterizes the

and Mule Society, characterizes the animals as wise and regal.

"They don't hurry. They do things in their own time," she said, petting a month-old burro she calls "Little Toot."

Ms. Falley said she began relying on donkeys to protect her goats and chickens after she moved to her ranch in Lockhart, northeast of San Antonio, in the 1960s and found that predators considered her livestock "groceries."